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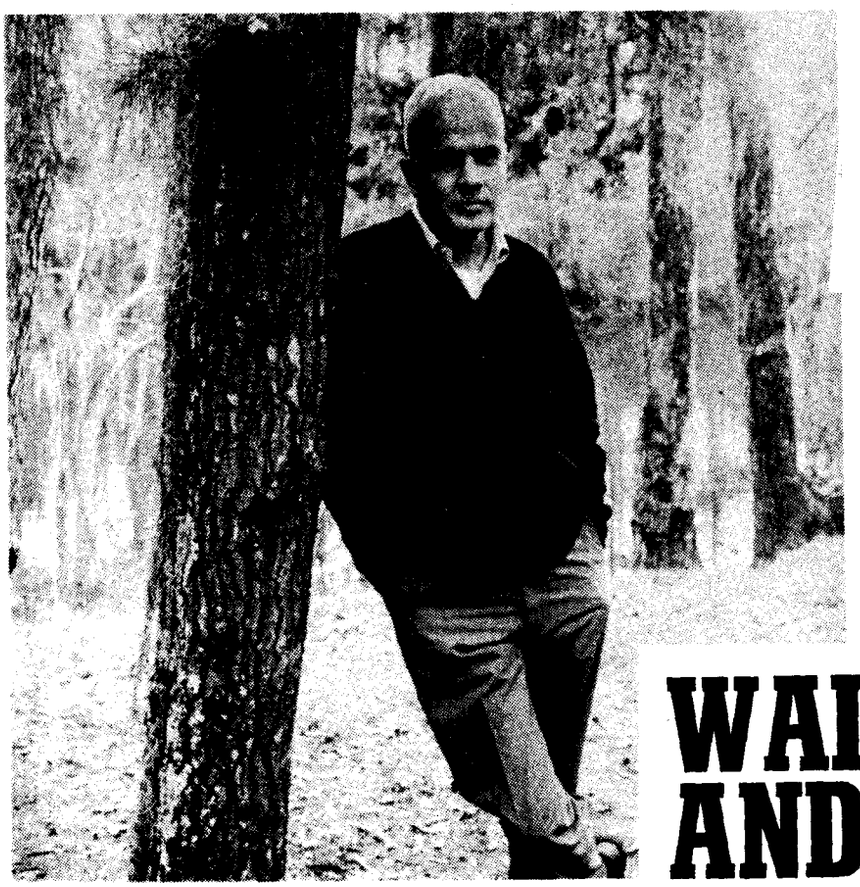

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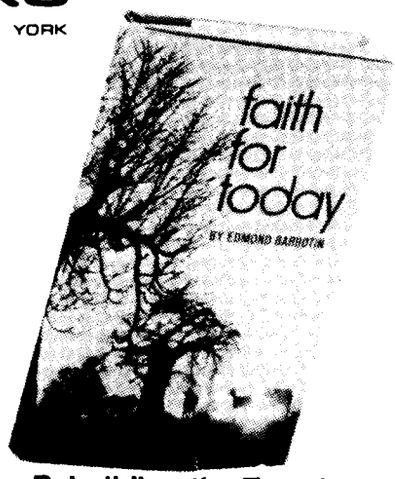

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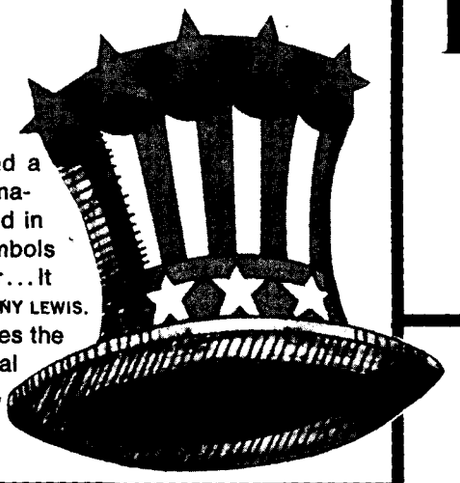

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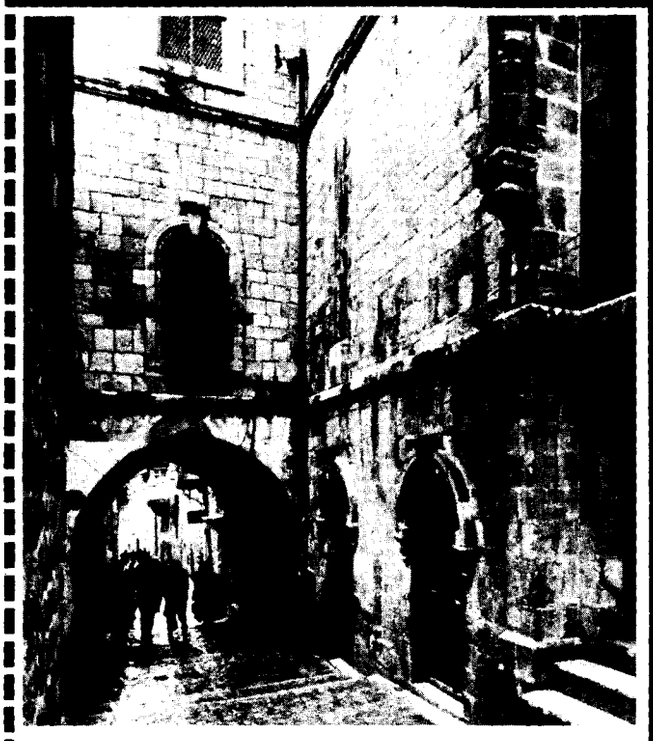

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NEWS & VIEWS

Occupying Churches

That new phenomenon of the poor occupying churches has crept from France, Belgium and Spain to Rome itself, and taken on a political as well as social dimension—specifically in terms of the upcoming Holy Year.

"There are 800 churches in the papal city and the poorly housed have occupied three," the Rome correspondent of *Informations Catholiques Internationales* reports in the current issue. "It makes one think: to accommodate the Holy Year pilgrims, a series of large hotels is about to be built in Rome. What is the significance of this 'holiness' which preoccupies itself with tourists and ignores the city's most destitute inhabitants?"

One of the churches being occupied is St. Paul's-Outside-the-Walls. An occupier there is quoted:

"We protest, in this church, against the capitalist structures of a city in which 60,000 dwellings are vacant and 100,000 people (a record in Europe) live in hovels. A city in which, in the last few years, 270,000-low-cost dwellings should have been built and only 4,500 were. A city, prey to financial speculation in which the superwealthy can be found cheek by jowl with people who have to hunt cats in the Coliseum to overcome their hunger."

The occupying of churches enrages certain Christians, who view the action as a "violating of the house of God." On this point, the sarcasm of the *Informations* correspondent: "What a scandal to see people talking, sleeping, camping around the altar, children playing between the Virgin's altar and that of St. Rita."

Others, not at all scandalized, find it quite normal that both the phenomenon should occur and that the churches—some at least—should welcome the poor. At St. Paul's-Outside-the-Walls, they are given food and medical aid. "Were not the Benedictine abbeys traditionally the refuge of the poor?" declared the new prior-elect, Giovanni Turbessi.

Informations comments that "in a certain way we are witnessing the birth of a sort of 'theology of the occupying of churches.' . . . Considered as a house of God reserved for liturgical rites, the place of worship becomes a home for everyone and even furnishes shelter for the homeless."

A priest whose ministry is to the homeless is quoted: "What is surprising is that the phenomenon should be surprising. For years we have been complaining that the poor are leaving the Church, but it can be asked whether . . . it is not the Church which has abandoned them. A Church without poor people would be a poor Church. The problem posed by the homeless is that of a Church which has come to appear as the property of the rich, linked to the power exercised by the speculators who produce the homeless."

The occupation of the churches became an issue at a recent congress organized by the Diocese of Rome on the problems of social justice in the Eternal City. A delegation of occupiers was designated to call on Cardinal Poletti, Vicar of Rome; he received them and in turn urged the parishes to place themselves "and all their goods" at the service of the poor.

"And the poor have taken him at his word," *Informations* concludes. "They have come to take peacefully what is theirs. They have come to remind the Church that if it is to remain faithful to Christ it must follow His example and concern itself with the poor above all. Pope John said: 'The Church belongs to all people but especially to the poor.'"

Maryknoll and Chile

Causing considerable flap in the Maryknoll community is an article in the April issue of the order's magazine which takes a surprisingly benign look towards the recent military coup in Chile.

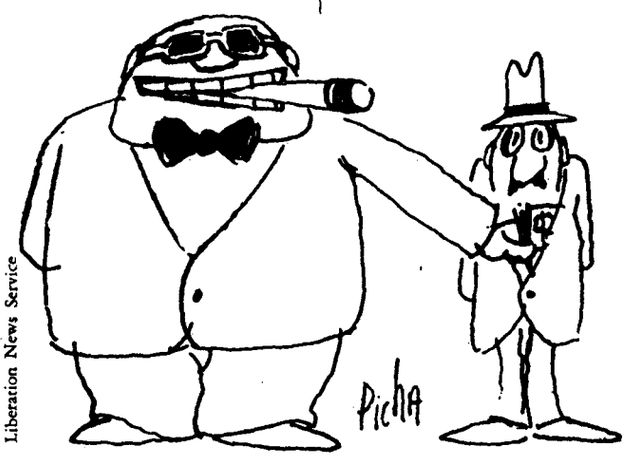
Written by Father Miguel d'Escoto, M.M., editor and publisher of *Maryknoll*, the article deplores that "many well-intentioned people continue readily to accept a Marxist interpretation of recent events in Chile and firmly deny they may have been deceived, even after facts clearly demonstrate that this has been the case."

d'Escoto, a native Nicaraguan, writes that "the military were, if anything, almost too respectful of Chile's long-standing tradition of military non-intervention."

"They moved reluctantly but decisively," he added, "only when it was obvious that Allende's government had placed itself in direct opposition to constitutional legality and thereby threatened their country, which they had pledged themselves to defend."

This is an interpretation of events that runs counter to that of many Maryknollers. The latter are especially upset that the viewpoint should be promulgated in the official magazine of the Maryknoll order. (*Maryknoll's* circulation: over 300,000.)

Adding salt to their wound is that the Chilean Embassy in Washington is using reprints of the article as a propaganda handout.



Liberation News Service

Odds and Ends

—The National Conference of Catholic Bishops is meeting these days in 12 separate locations across the country. The meetings are all open, except that of region 3, headed by the president of the U.S. Catholic Conference, Cardinal Krol, and chaired by Bishop Ahr of Trenton. Region 3 will meet in secret and there will be no news conference. When a New York newsman phoned the "status & information contact" listed for the region on the general press release out of Washington, Msgr. William E. Maguire was surprised. He didn't know he had been designated as region contact. Theme of the meetings: "The Use of Modern Means of Communication as Instruments of Evangelization."

—Editorial comment on the Sister Gloria Fitzgerald case at Boston University [News & Views, 4/26/74] has leap-frogged, inevitably, from protest over the handling of Sister Fitzgerald to prediction. Said BU's *Daily Free Press*: "A change in Catholic dogma allowing the ordination of women as priests is inevitable." Said the *New York Times*: "A Church that has always elevated its heroic women to sainthood is not likely to resist indefinitely admitting them to the priesthood."

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

The Devil's Due

Flushing, N.Y.

To the Editors: I read your review of *The Exorcist* [Mar. 1] with some astonishment. Does not Mr. Westerbeck realize that, far from claiming a victory, the devil was soundly defeated? The death leap of Father Karras precluded the devil's possessing the priest's body and his obvious desire for confession just before he died foiled, as well, any chance the devil had of taking his soul.

The movie, I might add, was stunning.

PATRICIA A. PRYBIL

P.S. Oh—and even the exorcism was effected although in somewhat unorthodox fashion. The devil, upon demand from the frenzied Karras, leaves the body of the child he had vowed to possess until she should "lie stinking in her grave."

Chesterton & Friends

Rochester, N.Y.

To the Editors: You mean you had a new Chesterton book reviewed [Mar. 22] by a man who has never read GKC, and has no intention of beginning now? Those of us who grew up on the Chesterbelloc are angry with you.

GKC was the most genial of men. He won't haunt you. But look out for Belloc! Go read his lines to "the Don who dared attack my Chesterton," and beware! Belloc was a hard and dangerous fighter. He'll make you wish you had given the book to someone like Maisie Ward or Frank Sheed.

SISTER ST. FRANCIS

Milwaukee, Wis.

To the Editors: I admire Dennis O'Brien's honesty in confessing [Mar. 22] that he "can't exactly recall reading any Chesterton," but I am puzzled as to why *Commonweal* should assign such a reviewer to Dudley Barker's GKC biography.

It is inconceivable that a journal of

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COMMONWEAL A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts.
Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y.
Printed in the USA and published weekly,
except biweekly Christmas-New Year's and June to mid-September,
by Commonweal Publishing Co., 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016
MUrray Hill 3-2042. *Copyright © 1974 Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc.*
US and Canada: $14 a year. Foreign $16. Single copies 50c

AFTER MICHIGAN

Now that the dust has settled, what picture emerges from the Democratic victory in Michigan? The President took a big gamble and lost. The dimensions of his defeat are significant. Like Vice President Ford's old district where the GOP had previously lost, Michigan's 8th District in which Mr. Nixon campaigned was a traditional Republican stronghold. Until now there had not been a Democrat elected from the district since the black days of the Depression, and Mr. Nixon carried it with no trouble in each of his Presidential efforts. Indeed, so set is the area in its GOP ways that both Democrats and Republicans reportedly rarely bother to campaign hard there. Watergate shattered this placid pattern, and the candidate labeled "Nixon's man" bit the dust. If this can happen in a district that has been held by the Republicans without interruption for 40 years, small wonder that GOP Senator Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, assistant minority leader, said after the voting that "no Republican should assume he has a safe seat any more."

Mr. Nixon is obviously a political albatross, and he is dragging the GOP down. If it were not such a serious matter there would be something almost comic about the efforts of GOP leaders to disentangle themselves from their Republican President. A favorite ploy even before Michigan was to shift all Watergate blame from the GOP to Mr. Nixon's special campaign units—as if all the wrongdoing inside the White House itself had never happened. Thus Vice President Ford, appearing before thousands of cheering Illinois Republicans, denounced the Committee for the Reelection of the President as "an arrogant, élite guard of political adolescents." Never again, Mr. Ford told the Middle Western party leaders, could the Republican party allow the Presidential candidate to bypass the regular party organization and set up a campaign group that would make its own rules "and dictate the terms of a national election." "If there are any more cliques of ambitious amateurs who want to run political campaigns, let the Democrats have them next time," Mr. Ford said in a speech that political commentators saw as putting a certain distance between him and the President. In 1976, the Vice President said, the Republican party should demand a pledge from all candidates that they would not set up such

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committees without the party's consent. On Michigan, while White House comments tended to play down the implications of the voting, Mr. Ford said simply that the Republicans had taken "a licking" in which Watergate played a part; for the party to try to gloss it over, he said, would be unrealistic. Thus to an increasing extent the Vice President seems to be speaking for the GOP as much as for the Administration, balancing the growing conviction in Republican ranks that disaster looms ahead for themselves and the party unless they can somehow dissociate themselves from their scandal-plagued President, on the one hand, with affirmations of personal support for Mr. Nixon on the other, as in his Oklahoma speech. Until the Michigan loss, for example, Mr. Ford had always expressed confidence that the potential impeachment proceedings would not hurt Republican prospects this fall. After having had time to mull over the results from Michigan, however, he cautioned his fellow-Republicans against allowing the Democrats to turn the fall elections into a national referendum on President Nixon. And once again he expressed his views on the Nixon-created reelection committee: "I am disgusted with political trickery of the CREEP variety or any other creeps who are looking for an easy but unethical or illegal road to victory. We must never again permit CREEP or any creepy successor organization to spoil the name of the Grand Old Party."

Although they don't go far enough in ascribing blame, in this limited condemnation Mr. Ford and the party leaders for whom he speaks are surely right. Mr. Nixon from the very beginning of his career has been one of the nation's most partisan Republicans. Now, by a strange irony, the most astringent partisan of them all has dealt his own party a crippling blow, one from which it may take decades to recover. In the wake of their Michigan defeat, it is this aspect of the matter that preoccupies Mr. Ford and the party professionals, and this is understandable enough. But their concern, and the publicity given to it in the media, should not obscure what is the more important fact: not since Harding has there been such a corrupt Administration, and if this fact has understandably hurt the GOP, it has dealt the nation as a whole a far more serious wound. Because of the multitude of scandals and unhappy revelations that have come to be lumped under the general heading of Watergate, the American people have tended to lose confidence not only in the GOP but in the very process of government itself. No matter what happens now, Mr. Nixon leaves his successor a badly crippled Presidency, and the wrongdoing of his Administration has gravely weakened popular respect for the American government and for American institutions as a whole. It is this fact which is tragic, not the lost confidence in the Republican party.

COMING: Thomas Powers on 'right to reply' statutes and freedom of the press

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GOD, MAN AND THE COMMONWEALTH

PENNSYLVANIA GOTHIC

Pennsylvania may share the general malaise of most Americans in this second Spring of Watergate, but in the state's primary election this month citizens will have an opportunity not so much to vote their political discontent as to provide an expression of what the public morality as defined by its legislators should be. Not at issue, however, is the presence of highly-placed tax dodgers, special interest bag men or influence peddlers in government, but rather the security of the Commonwealth and its people as it involves the electric chair, colonial-era laws relating to fornication and adultery and the abortion debate.

Although hardly heated up, the barely visible pre-primary campaign amounts to a challenge to the party leadership of Democratic Governor Milton Shapp, a onetime maverick who has consolidated his political base and even somewhat soothed his constituents, who have long proclaimed via the bumper sticker medium that they live in an oppressed land of taxes. His challenger, though, has chosen morality and the decline of the family as the crux of his gubernatorial campaign, and many political sophisticates in Harrisburg and Philadelphia are taking notice of the campaign.

They have to, because Martin Patrick Mullen is not just another candidate of an outraged morality. Marty Mullen has two decades in the state legislature, but his real accomplishment is that he has become something of a Wilbur Mills to that body and as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee is the bread man for any state project, whether urgent or porkbarrel, needed or foolish.

It was this role, in fact, which awakened Mullen to the fact that he need not be an obscure head of a do-nothing rubber stamp committee for the budget wishes of the Governor's office, described by old Harrisburg hands as "a $2-billion pie-cutting-and-eating contest."

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In 1965 Mullen actually took a look at the budget of former Republican Gov. William Scranton and demanded to know where a $6-million surplus came from (the improbable answer: left over from the days when people "mistakenly sent Social Security payments to the state," which could not be returned because the addresses were lost and had since been earning interest).

What Mullen proceeded to do outraged Democratic as well as Republican pols: he and a team of legislative hawkshaws began tearing apart that greatest of all pork-barrels outside Washington: the capital construction budget of the Pennsylvania General State Authority, which for years has fed as an equal opportunity employer the needs of both Republicans and Democrats alike—and especially Republican and Democratic architects, contractors, engineering firms and party organizations. The latter, of course would get *theirs* through the old percentage kickback route from the former.

Both party leaders were furious with the upstart representative from Philadelphia, and what happened, says Harrisburg political hand Willard Randall, was "that half of the fat was glued back on to the mutilated hide of the GSA, but Mullen had saved the taxpayers $75-million and had won his point and there never was a budget like that again." Mullen had also made a name for himself, and soon afterward he ventured into controversial issues which would eventually lead him to the role of spokesman for what one colleague calls "the anti-abortion and pro-electric chair" factions.

Part of the problem may be the notion that John Kennedy somehow swept the old religion-and-politics bugaboo under the rug before the Houston Ministers in 1960: ward politicians and county chairmen alike know otherwise in Pennsylvania. For while a Brotherhood luncheon montage exists, the pols know that for their purposes the state has two big Catholic cities, a Protestant-dominated rural countryside and a Jewish occupant of the Governor's mansion. And despite the daily trauma of Watergate and national political scandal, one of the largest unemployment rates in the nation, and energy and transportation crisis situations which played havoc with the Pennsylvania economy, the state's voters this May 21 will be asked to register their approval as to which man's philosophy is correct about abortion, divorce and capital punishment.

This might not seem too strange when it is recalled that Pennsylvania politics has never really been the same since the late Governor David Lee Lawrence left the scene. The well-oiled machine which functioned smoothly and predictably for over three decades in conducting the affairs of Pittsburgh, and which interlocked with that in Philadelphia under former Mayor Tate was always a comfort to the Democrats in Presidential years. Now maverick Democrats who have been at war with their respective party organizations are mayors of both cities and the Governor, who has assumed what statewide leadership remains and who has made peace with once hostile labor groups, seeks a second term. The nationwide trucker's strike earlier this year gained Milton Shapp some credibility and increased popularity when he took on the Nixon Administration and its energy policy, and most pundits see him with a good political shot this November.

Not Marty Mullen, though. He sees this month's party primary as an opportunity to "decide whether to approve or reject an incumbent Governor whose record against the Right to Life of the unborn is crystal clear." This is in reference to the Governor's support for liberalized divorce reform and his veto of the Legislature's action making abortion illegal. Mullen has also attacked Shapp because of the Governor's pledge that he will not use the electric chair while he is in office. And while most of the state's newspapers and many of its officials look upon Mullen's views in a lighthearted way, they know that some of them are shared by many—perhaps most—of the state's voters.

A Western Pennsylvania Congressman, whose district embraces a steel-producing valley heavy with ethnic communities, recently had 26,000 returns on a poll sampling opinion for capital punishment, and reported that all but six percent approved the death penalty for either first degree murder or "second time murderers." The state's religious diversity and tradition suggest less doctrinaire attitudes on divorce and abortion, but there is no doubt that the Mullen emphasis upon morality and the family is reaching a wide audience.

Two years ago *Philadelphia Magazine* profiled Mullen and said that he "makes about $75,000 a year from his law practice, from rents on properties he has acquired, from his combined $15,000 salary and expenses as a state legistalor, has two homes, two apartments, two cars, travels widely and eats a little too well." The disclosures angered Mullen, who holds that a man's privacy of earnings are as sacred as the Legislature's right to control fornication and adultery. "Thank God the magazine sells for a buck," he said at the time, "most people in my district couldn't afford to buy it."

That kind of living may never get Mullen into trouble, nor does it especially anger his frustrated legislative combatants, who see him not so much as an aggrieved power broker—definitely not an intellectual adversary—as much as a True Believer who has said of his reason for getting into the abortion controversy: "God has told me what I must do." Willard Randall summed him up two years ago as " . . . Marty Mullen, a dogged man, whose life and career have been a long act of faith in himself, his Church and his idea of the role of good government. Faith that, if not in this life, surely in the next, he will be amply rewarded."

RUSSELL W. GIBBONS

(Russell W. Gibbons, a frequent contributor, is a labor editor living in Pittsburgh.)

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SPRING IN THE LAND — AND HUNGER

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

PASCHALTIDE and spring coincide this year. They do not always do that for those of us who live north of the 39th parallel, but when they do there is a happy sense of the fitness of things. Resurrection is affirmed by every breaking leaf and bud. Every letter from Minnesota or Massachusetts these days mentions spring.

"New birds stop at the feeder every day," says one, and "I limed the side lawn yesterday," I read in another, "The lilies of the valley are coming up by the back steps where the sun strikes all day long." There is a healing of the senses and the heart in these things. We slip back for awhile into the preoccupations of our forebears—earth and rain and seed and sun. We think as they did of the promise of the land, of what we can plant and grow and reap, even if we actually do no more than daydream over the seed company advertisements in the Sunday supplements.

Our forebears came here seeking food more often than they sought fame and fortune. And America is still bountiful enough to feed the world's hungry. Never mind, for a bit, the gloomy predictions of stripmining which will rob the West and Midwest of rich topsoil it took centuries to build. Put in the back of our minds—for a little while—Justice Douglas saying, with foreboding, that he wished we loved our land enough to quit, once and for all, ripping it up with highways and developments. Or Robert Lowell brooding with poetic *angst* over the violence betokened by the constant, restless changing and digging in our cities. These cosmic concerns drain us of the renewed energy which springs from Easter and the witness borne by plants bursting from seed and thrusting upward to the light.

For the moment, let us give some thought to simple answers, to the needs right at hand. The Center of Concern here in Washington reminds us in a recent newsletter that many people are hungry and will grow hungrier still as food costs soar to the levels predicted for this year. (The most painful aspect of the Hearst kidnapping to many was that there were people hungry enough themselves—or moved by the need of their dependents—to set aside human dignity for food procured at a blood price. No one who shops for food can doubt that the poor must be hungry, especially old people on pensions and families with children.)

"We believe that there is a way to help at the local level in a way that will build up local communities and speak of Christ's values," write the editors of *Quest*, the Center newsletter. ". . . Scattered throughout this country, even in the heart of cities, are small and large pieces of land which are unused, or whose use might easily be changed to permit growing food. *Municipal lands, diocesan and parish properties, land held by religious orders, schools and colleges, private property;* all of these offer thousands of acres of land which, if made available to persons of fixed and low income, might help ease hunger and the nagging anxiety of inflation and lack of food. . . . With this in mind, *we urge readers to undertake the establishment of community gardens with individual plots in which people might grow food for their own use.*"

It is an appealing suggestion. Urban dwellers can and do take to gardening in earnest as those who remember World War II victory gardens can attest. Some people never gave them up. As long as I can remember there have been people working small plots near an apartment complex on once-fashionable Connecticut Avenue, and another little plantation of gardens near the ill-named Washington Home for Incurables.

But the suggestion of the staff of the Center of Concern has larger scope and implications. They point to efforts already under way: Kermit Gordon, president of the Brookings Institution wrote to the *Washington Post* this year that the institution offered the use of a large part of its grounds again this year so that its neighbors, residents of the center city—if not of the inner city as the euphemism has it—in the hope that "tomatoes, green beans, and cucumbers will again flourish on P Street this year." In suburban Arlington, Virginia, the county board offered 70 garden plots on county land. Boston offers land in Back Bay; a Wisconsin religious community offered land last year at an empty seminary, and presumably will do so again.

Of course, a nagging realism warns that gardeners are made through years of trial and work; they are not born. And the smallest garden plot involves a lot of stoop labor. Not all land bears the first year. Soil must be built up, and it is a hard fact that there is a great deal of unyielding hardpan left by bulldozers under the smiling mask of city lawns. Things get at gardens. Borers and slugs and rabbits and weeds vie for the fruits of your hard work, and, when it comes to picking time, the light-fingered can wipe out a summer's work in less than an hour. (I never lived in a small town where a gardener with a patch of melons or sweet corn didn't keep a shot gun loaded with rock salt handy.) Those who would give the hungry of the high rises and the city streets gardens must also give them patient help along the way.

Still, why should we not try it? Gardens are testaments to hope. Might not sharing gardens spread generosity, gentleness, and good sense like an infection—subtly changing everything?

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WALKER PERCY AND THE SELF

LEWIS JEROME TAYLOR, JR.

The problems of the times and the failure of the individual

Walker Percy is no stranger to the readers of *Commonweal,* and yet he bears repeated introduction because of the significance of what he sees and what he has to say. Percy has keen and perceptive eyes for the despair underlying the increasing disarray of society, its root cause and its possible cure. It is not, however, knowledge about reality as such that primarily concerns him but the way by which a person can come to himself and begin to live his own life. Percy is an existentialist. A delightful thing about him, and one that continually carries over into his fictional characters, is that he is a man of surprises, which is to say that he is a man who seems somehow to have moved into the realm of freedom. It is first of all in his philosophical position that one can see a clear instance of this, because it is here that he has made a decisive break with his past. European-Existentialist just does not fit with Southern-Traditional-Conservative-Greek Classical, the atmosphere of the Mississippi home and person of his uncle, William Alexander Percy, who raised him. And yet, again surprisingly, he retains a basically conservative orientation along with the fresh view that continually questions it.

It is the need for an initial decisive *break* that Percy sees as central to the task of self-becoming. Such a break came for him when he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis while working as a medical intern in New York City and had to spend two "enforced years" in the Adirondacks. It was then that he began to read the European existentialists. As he recalls it, "I think it was probably through Sartre first, probably through reading *Nausea.* And then later going back to Kierkegaard and then coming forward to Heidegger and Marcel." "But," he adds, "Kierkegaard is probably the one who deserves the most credit. He saw it most clearly."

Both Percy and Kierkegaard are centrally concerned with one vital question. While many, perhaps most, theological and even existentialist thinkers are content to probe the objective truth of human reality, Percy and the Danish "Father of Existentialism" are concerned with the vital question *how.* How can one make the necessary movements that can take him from inauthentic to authentic existence? It is by means of his fictional beings that he portrays the movements to selfhood, as he understands the way in which these take place.

Percy has a keen awareness of the dissolution of things. He compares himself to the canary that coal miners used to take down into the shaft to see if the atmosphere were livable. "When the canary gets unhappy, utters plaintive cries and collapses it may be time for the miners to surface and think things over." He experiences more acutely than most the horror of the deep subterranean flaw underlying the surface "niceness" of everyone and uses his novels to warn his fellows. Dr. Thomas More, the protagonist in his latest novel, *Love in the Ruins,* is a middle-aged, rather shaky psychiatrist who sees what others do not, that most people, though going through many motions, are really "dead, dead, dead." U.S.A. is in a state of rapidly accelerating ruin; vines, which only he can see, are coming up through the cracks in the streets and sidewalks and sprouting everywhere. A dangerous polarization has set in, and rightist Knotheads and Leftist Leftpapasans are at each other's throats. Goods and services are breaking down. Cars are left rusting in parking lots because there is no one to fix them; "nobody wanted to be a repairman."

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[63] Dr. Percy must be either chortling in his beer or shaking in his boots—or both—as he reads his newspaper today, three years after the publication of this book. Rightist guerrilla warriors in Atlanta? Fights among the poor receiving food extorted by kidnapping? Empty highways? Watergate? Is it a newspaper or another installment of *Love in the Ruins* that he has gotten his hands on?

Existentialist that he is, Percy traces the problem of the times not to faulty societal or economic structures, but to failure of the individual. It is rooted essentially in the universal human tendency to take the easy way of floating on the tide of external influences and thereby forfeiting one's sovereignty and the place on which one is given to stand. Because of this, a person becomes lost to himself, he is barely able to experience himself as a self, he lives outside of himself and does not know who he is. He is in despair, and the worst kind of despair is that which is so successfully covered up by diversion that one is hardly aware of it.

The essential human failing, then, is that of allowing oneself to be seduced by the magical charms of externals, whether these come in the more obvious pleasures of sex, the anesthesia of "miles and miles of T.V. or movie tape," or in more subtle ways. Why is this the human tendency? Because of the structure of our human nature, says Percy. Because of the way we are made. Man is not at home on his earth-island as the animals are. He is a "castaway," a "wayfarer." He is in an in-between state. As Percy puts it, a man is "neither a beast nor an angel but a wayfaring creature somewhere between." The problem is that this is a very uncomfortable state in which to live. One feels the urging within himself of possibility, but he is restricted by his own particularity of place, history and genes. He senses the ultimacy of the challenge to act upon his own and that somehow for him this is a life-or-death matter. But suppose he fails? In the face of such a challenge held out by freedom he is anxious, and it is his attempt to evade this natural anxiety that leads him to the diversion of the moment.

In Percy's view there is a particular manifestation of this evasive movement which is increasingly seductive to the present scientistic age. This is the temptation to forfeit one's sovereignty to "the experts." Modern man, Percy believes, tends more and more to let the expert's theory of what is true, most adequate, or real usurp his own ability to see and act for himself. In an age in which the credentials of science are erroneously believed to apply to all sectors of reality, the temptation becomes strong. An example can be seen in the fact that abstract theories are increasingly applied to human relationships; unfortunately the theory tends to be regarded as more real than the relationship itself. Percy observes that this is the layman's way of falling into what Alfred North Whitehead terms "The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness." A veil of abstractions comes between the person and the reality that is there before him. He allows the *idea* to intervene and claim his attention, thus losing his sovereign power to see. It is not a little thing, because, says Percy, it is in this way more than any other that selfhood is being eroded today.

Examples abound in Percy's fiction, and they are at the same time humorously presented and chillingly eerie in their import. Tom More experiences the problem as it profoundly affects his relationship with his wife. Doris, who "began life as a cheerful Episcopalian from Virginia, became a priestess of the high places . . . 'But we don't relate,' said Doris absently, still not leaving though, eyes fixed on St. Francis who was swarming with titmice." [64, 66] She is so captured by her idea of the way their love should be, as proclaimed by the religious and behavioral experts, that she can no longer see and thereby love the concrete Tom. Similarly, Percy describes what happens in the broader social milieu when a person becomes so lost to himself "that he will fall prey to the first abstract notion proposed to him and will kill anybody who gets in his way, torture, execute, wipe out entire populations, all with the best possible motives and the best possible intentions, in fact, in the name of peace and freedom, et cetera." [328]

Loss of self to expert theory and ideology is not the only evasion of the *angst* as Percy is well aware. He recognizes them all, pomposity, status-seeking, simple greed and lust, and describes them with wry and perceptive humor. Of particular significance is what he calls "impersonation"—the tendency to adapt like a chameleon to the other. Tom More falls victim repeatedly to impersonation in spite of the fact that he has essentially broken with evasive ways. On one occasion, while walking along the road, he is hailed by a colleague, Dr. Dusty Rhoades, with whom he is not on the best of terms. And yet, "Before I know what I'm doing I'm grinning too and hopping around to the door with every appearance of delight." [74] Thus, in many ways do the characters seek to avoid the pain of being what they really are—"wayfarers."

If all of this is what it is to be dead, how does Percy see the possibility of coming alive? Life itself, he clearly implies, provides the means in and through concrete situations and events. The cardinal instrument by which one can cease floating passively on all manner of external attractions can be summed up in one key word in Percy's vocabulary: catastrophe. It is by the grace of catastrophe that a person can come to himself and see what is before him as if for the first time. Catastrophe can, like a mighty wind, blow away the abstracting veils of theory and ideology and enable his own sovereign seeing. Catastrophe can come in the form of increasing inner despair, as Kierkegaard primarily saw it, or in the form of external accident or event. Percy describes both kinds.

Will Barrett, for example, is an undergraduate at

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Princeton in the opening scenes of *The Last Gentleman*. He is not allowing himself to live because to do so is too risky. Instead, he adopts the others' "certain Princeton way of talking . . . sticking their hands in their pockets and settling their chins in their throats." [14] He loses himself in all manner of proper Princetonianisms, but fortunately he is not allowed to get away with it. Despair, the inevitable result of self-forfeiture, intensifies until finally it enables a "moment" of awareness and a leap to an entirely new mode of existence. One bright football weekend despair is so pressing upon Will that he feels as if he is moving around like a sloth. "At last, and despite himself, he uttered a loud groan, which startled him and momentarily silenced his classmates. 'Hm', he muttered and peered at his eyeballs in the mirror. 'This is no place for me for another half hour, let alone two years'." [15] Within an hour he is on a bus bound for New York City and launched upon a serious quest, at the end of which he will recover

himself and be able for the first time to live in the "lovely ordinary world."

The initial break, however, by no means constitutes the attainment of selfhood. In each novel, there follows a long and lonely struggle which centrally involves responsibility to what the hero can now see. He is, for the first time, able to begin upon a "search" which, though it takes different forms, has essentially the same characteristics for each protagonist. Percy explicitly identifies this phase of the process of self-recovery with what Kierkegaard broadly calls the "religious stage." More specifically, as it appears in Percy's heroes, it is plainly what Kierkegaard calls the "movement of infinite resignation." The hero resigns the comfort of living as one of "the crowd." In their citation of *The Moviegoer* as winner of the 1962 National Book Award For Fiction the judges concluded with this revealing observation: "Mr. Percy, with compassion and without sentimentality or the mannerisms of the clinic, examines the delusions and hallucinations and the daydreams and the dreads that afflict those who abstain from the customary ways of making do."

Dr. Thomas More's initial break with immediacy was made prior to the opening of the narrative and was enabled, in his case, by external catastrophe. Tom's preteenage daughter, Samantha, whom he loved very much, died of a neuroblastoma, and Doris left him for an abstracting Englishman. When the reader meets him Dr. More is a bit shaky but, nevertheless, he can see and act. Like Percy himself, he sees the radical dissolution of society. Paradise Estates is polarizing into two groups so gripped by their respective ideologies that the persons involved can hardly see each other. Many young people have dropped out altogether and are living a detached kind of unreality of their own in the swamp. The blacks, known as Bantus, are organizing for all-out guerrilla war to take over from the whites, who for all their Christian talk have failed them as human beings.

Tom alone really sees it, but he must endure the suffering of not being able to communicate what he sees to his neighbors. It is his single-minded effort to avert the impending doom that constitutes Tom's religious "movement of infinite resignation." Because of his inability effectively to relate what he sees to the inhabitants of another existence mode, he is considered to be slightly mad, even though lovably so. But then it is precisely his outcast, apparently sick condition that renders him serviceable to the various and assorted Bantus, love-couples, and drugheads who gravitate to him alone for medical help. Like Graham Greene's whiskey priest, he has his own aesthetic crutches—alcohol, girls, and ambition, but he does not allow these to interfere with his central task.

But is this all there is to authentic selfhood?—struggle, resignation and suffering? Decidedly not, in Percy's view, as his novels clearly show. The point of it all in each story is that the final movement to self-recovery comes unexpectedly, and, as it were, from the outside. The first movement goes to the point where all normal societal and other life supports have been stripped away. The hero has progressively put all else aside in pursuit of his mission, but finally the mission itself comes crashing around his ears. It is precisely at this moment of second catastrophe that he is enabled to make the final movement to selfhood. In each of Percy's novels this action is made possible by the combination of two things: the final collapse of normal life-supports and the concrete presence of another person whom he sees as if for the first time. The "thunderstorm breaks," to use Kierkegaard's memorable phrase, and he is aware of himself in his "eternal validity" as ultimately responsible for that person. He has received back everything that he had resigned and more, because at last he has acquired *himself*. Will Barrett's mouth dropped open when the final recognition took place and he saw Sutter no longer as his answer but as his responsibility. The author comments, "Perhaps this moment more than any other, the moment of his first astonishment, marked the beginning for the engineer of what is called a normal life." [374]

The brief description of the hero's life following this

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dramatic recovery of self is, in each story, a picture of willingness to live in the world from which he had initially broken in despair. We come upon Tom More five years later: "Hoeing collards in my kitchen garden. . . . After hoeing a row: sit in the sunny corner, stretch out my legs and look at my boots." [381] "All any man needs is time and desire and the sense of his own sovereignty." [382] In these words and others like them, Percy is saying that there is a way to selfhood, the way of the quest which makes possible the final fulfillment. This description of the way to faith has obvious significance for an age described by Bonhoeffer as one in which it is not possible for man to be religious any more. Explicit god-consciousness is not a necessary characteristic of recovered selfhood as Percy portrays it, but it is clear that, in his view, the god-relationship has been restored. Walker Percy is a Catholic who specifically asserts his belief in the Christian understanding of man and salvation. He also specifically acknowledges that he sees his mission as a writer as that of conveying the Christian truth to an age for which the traditional words have worn so smooth that they no longer take effect. In his epilogue to *The Moviegoer* he remarks that the time is late, that it is no longer possible to be edifying in the same way in which Kierkegaard was, unless "ass-kicking" can be considered edifying. Percy's chief mission in his writings is to do a little ass-kicking or, as he says, to provide "vicarious catastrophe" so that his reader may be enabled to acknowledge his castaway condition sufficiently to embark upon a search of his own.

One caveat may be appropriate with regard to Percy's work. This is the impression that his writing may give that there are two categories of human beings: those who are "dead" and others who have gone the route of Tom More and are, perhaps, "alive." Should he not make it clear, as did Kierkegaard, that one does not leave one stage behind and move, once and for all, from essential non-selfhood to essential selfhood? The leap of faith, Kierkegaard warned, must be continually re-made. This demurrer, however, should not minimize the significant contribution which Percy's insights made with regard to the way of selfhood. Perhaps his overly schematized presentation is necessary in order that a blind age may get the point. He quotes with approval Flannery O'Connor's reply to a question as to why she created such bizarre characters: "For the near-blind you have to draw very large simple caricatures." Percy's "caricatures" are large and very entertaining, but above all they are concerned to communicate a most serious message. Whenever this canary utters his plaintive-humorous-hopeful cry again, there will certainly be those who are intent to listen.

HEINRICH BOLL ON WORK, FAITH, GERMANY

AN INTERVIEW

The new conception of the committed writer who is 'Made in Germany'

Heinrich Böll's career is, in its way, a German literary miracle. A novelist whose entire work (his chief novels are: *Bogner, Go Home; Children of the Dead; Where Were You, Adam?; The Two Sacraments; The Grimace; Group Portrait with Lady*) is located in a very circumscribed area around Cologne. Yet, he is the most translated (into more than 20 languages), the most widely read, in the West as in the East (his USSR sales exceed a million) of any contemporary German. Obsessed by a single theme, the German problem, he is the first writer from his country since Thomas Mann in 1929 to have received one year ago, the highest international literary distinction—the Nobel prize.

Today, reinforcing Jean-Paul Sartre in the international positions he takes (and with his recent intervention in favor of Soviet intellectuals), Heinrich Böll personifies a new conception of the committed writer who is "Made in Germany." On the eve of giving up the international presidency of P.E.N. in order to devote himself once more entirely to his writing, Heinrich Böll discussed this new conception with Jean-Louis de Rambures.

A.—"The successor of Jean-Paul Sartre." You forget one thing. I didn't, I haven't refused the Nobel prize. On the contrary, I am more delighted with every day that passes to have received it. Why? Oh, not from personal vanity. Simply because I am German.

There are certain things the French can permit themselves because they are a trifle spoiled. We can't. Whatever have been our past mistakes, we have never been spoiled. A French intellectual who commits himself has a long humanist tradition to lean upon. When we commit ourselves, there is always an underlying hidden fear; the fear of those who know how things can change from one day to another.

This interview by Jean-Louis de Rambures first appeared in the French daily, le Monde *on December 13, 1973. Used with permission. The translation is by Anne Fremantle.*

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Q.—Many of your compatriots pretend they didn't know what really went on during the Third Reich. Did you, Heinrich Böll, know?

A.—Let us understand one another. Not to see that Nazism was a terrorist régime, one would have had to be blind. What, on the other hand, I did not know was the systematic and bureaucratic elimination of millions of human beings, as practiced by the Third Reich. Apparently Albert Speer himself was completely unaware of this. It may seem crazy. But this is a fact, and will doubtless always remain inexplicable. Just once, however, I came near the truth. It was during a train journey. I was returning from the East, on leave. In the middle of the night our train stopped in a small unknown German railroad station. Suddenly, I saw an immense flock of shaved creatures invading the platform. A few raised their emaciated arms toward us travelers. We threw them bread and cigarettes out of the carriage windows. It was hallucinating. But I had no idea that this was genocide. It was only later, after the war, that I brought the two facts together; the little railroad station was Buchenwald.

Q.—Throughout your whole work, in all your characters, culpability returns as a leitmotif. *Have you, yourself, felt guilty?*

A.—I don't believe that an individual can be guilty just because he is born in one place rather than another. But neither is he for that reason innocent. That's the rub. Neither innocent, nor guilty, that's what we all are. The hardest thing for a German is to accept himself as such. By a wholly Germanic dialectic, it was by discovering what a malediction the fact of being German constitutes that I first became aware of belonging to this people. Let me explain. Until 1933, the question of my nationality had never bothered me. During the Third Reich, being against the regime, I did not feel myself concerned by the obligation imposed upon us to feel we were German.

It was in 1945, while I was a prisoner, that a relationship, which I would say was quasi-metaphysical, was born in me *vis-à-vis* this people, which had been, as it were, foreign to me until then. Wherever we traveled, as prisoners, in France, in Belgium, the inhabitants spat in our faces, threw stones at us. Simply because we were Germans. This explosion of collective hate was an unforgettable lesson: because Germany was despised, I suddenly became aware that for nothing on earth would I have refused to be a part of it.

Q.—Did this traumatization play any part in your literary commitment?

A.—What is a committed writer? I don't much care for that qualification, which sounds as though one were carrying a flag. You have in France the expression "a man of letters." I much prefer that. That is the way I commit myself.

In its rhetoric and its formality, the French language constitutes a prop to thought. We German writers, we have every time to explore the territory before we set foot on it. That stems, above all, from the *tabula rasa* created by the Third Reich. It annihilated all our connections with tradition or with the natural and social environment. For authors of an earlier generation, Ernst Jünger or Friedrich Sieburg, there was always some way of finding in the depths of their libraries the forbidden authors. We often were even unaware of their names. Kafka, I discovered in 1946. Herman Hesse, Erich Kastner vaguely reminded me of something. Thomas Mann? I only knew *Buddenbrooks*, and that by chance. In short, then, in an extraordinary spirit of rediscovered liberty, Germany took up writing again. (Between 1945 and 1947 I published, I think, sixty stories in ten different magazines.) It had to start again from zero. Our new literature has dismissed what hitherto had been considered the very essence of Germany—interiority.

Q.—If one can believe Ernst Jünger, by rejecting interiority, this new literature thereby lost some part of its soul?

A.—It was a necessary evolution. By dint of interiorization, we ended by giving up any capacity for political, social, or economic analysis. If Hitler was able to impose himself, it was owing to our habit of conceiving of history as an ineluctable fatality. I myself also had to make an effort to rid myself of this German distemper. Alas, we haven't come to the end of our capacity for interiorization. After 1945 this made us miss, I am quite sure, one of the greatest chances our history offered us. You must think back to what the situation of Germany was at that time: in a metropolis like Cologne, every inhabitant had become in fact a robber, in order to avoid dying of hunger or cold. In this immense indifference to private property, there was a nihilistic component which only needed to be mobilized.

Q.—The sociologist Alexander Mitscherlich considers that the Germans threw themselves desperately into the "economic miracle" to escape the unbearable idea of their culpability.

A.—That may have played a part. But for myself I am sure that the Germans (insofar as one can generalize) suffer from a fundamental trauma in the face of life. (Two total inflations one after another is enough to traumatize.) It is there that the real reason for our maniacal attachment to property must be looked for. Our irrational fear of Communism—oh, note well, not of Communism as a political system or a spiritual force, but only of Communism as an eventual menace to private property—this is the fear of a people that has always been poor throughout its history. Now that it possesses for the first time, it intends to profit from its goods without being bothered. It is a very human attitude.

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What, on the other hand, I find unforgivable, is the policy of the Christian Democrats for twenty years to feed this ambiant (surrounding) materialism and Adenauer's role in this. Was Adenauer particularly materialistic? I don't even think he was. But besides his fundamental dislike for human beings, he had also a bourgeois (in the bad sense of the word) mistrust of everything even faintly spiritual, critical, or merely intellectual. But perhaps one must be a German to understand the resistance of the intellectuals in the Federal Republic to the Christian Democrats in general and to Adenauer in particular. Your de Gaulle is no comparison. His action stemmed from a whole spiritual national tradition. We have nothing of the sort. That is why Adenauer was able to contribute to spreading materialism like a contagious sickness.

Q.—What surprising words in the mouth of a Catholic author!

A.—A Catholic writer? I challenge you to define such a creature! Materially speaking, I am made of Catholic stuff, like the potatoes that grow around Cologne. But that has only a purely sociological interest. That is to say: if it is already not easy for a German to be an intellectual, it is twice as uncomfortable for him also to be a Catholic. Here again France, a lay, perhaps even an atheist, country, but with a Catholic background, has an advantage over us. In Germany, where Catholics and Protestants are about equal in numbers, everyone resents his religion as a fate. If we have no specifically Catholic literature (except by converts like Gertrud von Le Fort) it is doubtless because, until 1945, the Catholic *milieu* was a major obstacle to any literary vocation. You must realize that my grandmother, and even my mother, would have made three signs of the cross over themselves at the very idea of having a novel of Zola's in their library! That's the background from which I come: one that had practically not changed since Bismarck's *kulturkampf*. No wonder that, to begin, with, I envied the freedom of expression of your Péguy or Bernanos. Because I was Catholic, I suffered, even with my very first novel, terrible tensions and difficulties with the hierarchy (I never let myself be scared by those idiots) and also with my family, which often thought my attitude incomprehensible. Today, I have liberated myself. The militant consequences of the Reformation are, anyway, now beginning to fade. But, even there, I'm afraid our Catholic renascence is limited to literature.

Q.—Do you still regard yourself as a Catholic?

A.—Fiscally, yes. The Vicar-General of the Diocese of Cologne has just reminded me of this by sending me a bill for my "Church tax." So that's how I have become baptized for a second time. It's a negative definition. But my beliefs (let's say I still believe in many things) are no one's business but my own. In fact, my problem is not religious, but political. You know there are two definitions of the Church: on the one hand, the institution (which I detest because of its tie-up with the bourgeoisie) and, on the other hand, the Mystical Body. I refuse to play the game of eternally justifying the first by invoking the second. Why then have I not left the bosom of the Church? That's a problem my wife and I often discuss. Perhaps, quite simply, because Catholicism was the major influence of my childhood. But when, for example, I hear that the Cardinal of Santiago participated in a *Te Deum* for the Chile *putsch*, I find that unbearable. I cannot, in fact, tell you how much longer I will remain a Catholic.

Q.—In any case, you are a moralist. You have even been called "the conscience of the nation."

A.—What a horrible definition, so characteristic of German idealism! I do not consider myself the least bit as a moralist, but as a player. Essentially it is the game with forms, with personages, with situations, that pleases me in writing. I have a horror of didactic literature. If I appear to be a moralist, it is completely unconsciously. Perhaps it is because the Nazi terror has traumatized me so I instinctively avoid any description of violent scenes. But from this to call me the conscience of a nation! Germany has 62,000,000 inhabitants. To discover its conscience, one would need a computer as big as Cologne.

Believe me, what characterizes our postwar literary generation is the very simple fact that we intellectuals refuse to see ourselves as marked men. We are citizens of the German Federal Republic like everyone else. We have something to say, and the chance to be heard. This is an advantage of which we make use every time we consider it necessary.

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MICHAEL PAUL NOVAK

MORNING IN SITGES

I sit on the balcony to watch
The stir of a maid's broom,
This hiss of a gardener's hose,
And I want to shout so quietly—
Slow down, for the moment fit
Our stereotype of the Spanish,
Become a little lazy,
Make your broom glide without dust,
Your hose arch in the air
Like a slender rainbow.
Match my stillness up here,
Move with ease to these rhythms
Of the year away
As we all drop like feathers
Through the sunny afternoon
To the good night.

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THE SCREEN

Even before you have seen Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* and Terence Malick's *Badlands,* you know from the titles that these two films are somehow alike. Each is a noun and an adjective, an uncomplimentary description of an unspecified place. The films sound related, like the city slicker and his country cousin. And on top of that, they seem to be leading similarly charmed lives. Each is its director's first feature and has been doing well at the box office. Though *Mean Streets* has been in circulation for months now, while *Badlands* went into commercial release only recently, both had showcase premieres at the New York Film Festival last fall and got good press as a result.

The films are indeed alike. The central character in *Badlands* plays a more eccentric role in *Mean Streets,* but the role is still the same. Kit (Martin Sheen) in *Badlands* and Johnny Boy (Robert De Niro) in *Mean Streets* are a couple of crazies. One day Kit shoots his girlfriend's father (Warren Oates) and then lights out from the South Dakota town where he grew up, taking the girl, Holly (Sissy Spacek), with him. On a desultory cross-prairie ramble he shoots half dozen people or so, including his only friend. While Johnny Boy is capable of equally erratic behavior—the first time we see him, he is blowing up a corner mailbox for laughs—he seems at the beginning only a minor fly in the pure olive oil of his friends' lives. But he too brings out in the open the violence of the society in which he lives, New York's Little Italy, and his only friend (Harvey Keitel) is also his victim, though not by his own hand.

What is more, as the titles of both films imply, they are not about individual characters so much as the spirit of a place. They are about the quality of life in a particular landscape. Looked at in this way, the way the filmmakers themselves seem to have wanted us to look, the comparison between the two films becomes invidious. It shows how much better and more intricately made *Badlands* is.

Scorsese's approach to his subject is direct and uncomplicated. His film is a rough one by design. Although done in Technicolor and having the production values of a fiction film, visually *Mean Streets* seems to have come out of the same bag as those rock-festival documentaries popular a few years ago. Almost none of the film was shot out on the street where conditions might have required such crude technique, but Scorsese apparently wanted his film to look like *cinéma verité* anyhow. Even in the ill-lit bar which is a main set Scorsese seems to have restricted himself to available light, working with fast, grainy color and, at times, a hand-held camera. His film, in other words, is made on the assumption that a raw, documentary look will persuade us that what we are seeing is real. This fits his idea of his characters and their lives, which is correspondingly simple. He is attempting to achieve only credibility—to get us to believe that the punks who live in Little Italy really behave this way. Maybe they do, for all I know.

Malick's *Badlands* has a more circuitous approach to reality. Since the film is set in 1959 and based on real and notorious characters—Charlie Starkweather and his girlfriend—a factual recreation might seem even more likely here than in *Mean Streets.* But Malick has gone in the opposite direction. Where Scorsese's punks are the norm in his film, Malick's celebrities are an extreme made to imply a norm. To accomplish this Malick must put a construction on events unlike anything Scorsese attempts. (In fact, putting a construction on events is precisely what Scorsese is trying to avoid.) The psychology of his characters is the only thing that guides Scorsese's direction and makes it coherent from scene to scene. His sense of what he is doing making a movie is purely dramatic. But Malick's is thematic, and his sense of himself guides him in the making of his film. Scorsese hopes only that we can understand from his characters' actions what is going on inside their heads. Malick wants something additional and harder: that we also understand from his characters' actions what is going on inside *his* head.

Beginning with the opening scene, in which Kit inspects the corpse of a dog left out on his garbage route, *Badlands* is in essence a series of vignettes about dead animals. Kit's murderousness arises from his proximity to dead animals as casually and naturally as his fame arises from his anonymity. After he quits the job on the garbage truck, he moves back to the other end of the food chain, working in the feeding pens at the stockyards; and there, later on, he noses around the carcass of a cow one morning with the same idle curiosity he showed for the dog. Later still, after the corpses begin being human, Kit hides one of them in an old refrigerator car, the sort used to ship freshly dressed meat to market.

The line in Kit's mind between beasts and men is so fine, he crosses it without really noticing. He and Holly are themselves the offspring of a culture in which, Malick makes it increasingly clear, the civil and the animal are intermingled, ambiguous, confused. After Kit kills Holly's father, he and Holly literally set up housekeeping in a tree, escaping to the forest where domestic life becomes a sort of animal life. There too, Kit booby-traps the area in case the law comes. One thing he does is to dig and camouflage a pit that we take to be a trap, one into which the hunter will fall as if he were the hunted. But when the hunters who come are bounty hunters (speaking of members of society who cross too easily the line between animals and men), the pit he had

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dug is in fact used as a blind from which Kit can shoot them.

Earlier, when Holly's father wanted to punish her for seeing Kit, he shot her dog and threw it into the river. In an atmosphere where moral authority takes such brutal, brutish form, Kit's actions begin to make grotesque sense to us. The moments of greatest violence become, peculiarly, the moments of greatest civility. After he shoots that former friend, for instance, Kit opens a door for the man as he stumbles blindly toward his house. From touches like this we begin to understand how Malick thinks Kit's violence gains him access to polite society. It makes him a recognized man in the community, as they say.

At the end the camera is trained on sunlit layers of clouds outside the window of an airplane transporting Kit to stand trial. But the cloud images, as if Kit were going to heaven instead, are appropriate. His capture provides him with the escape from anonymity he's been after. "You're a real individual," his guard remarks in disbelief at something he has said. Kit doesn't mind the sarcasm because an "individual" is just what he's been trying to become. As we have come to understand, however, everything Kit has been up to until this moment is ordinary in these bad lands. There are more things in this heaven and earth Malick has created for Kit, Mr. Scorsese, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

BOOKS

REVIEWING THE REVIEW (NY)

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Intellectual Skywriting

PHILIP NOBILE

Charterhouse, $7.95

When I casually mentioned to a fellow-correspondent at the Democratic Convention, a writer for the *New York Review of Books*, that Philip Nobile was hard at work on a book about *NYR* she replied that she couldn't imagine how anyone would be interested. On the contrary, it appears that just about everyone ("everyone" in the sense that everyone goes to the cocktail party after the National Book Awards) was interested.

Over a hundred of its writers, friends and enemies were interested enough to tell their stories to the intrepid Nobile —apparently anxious to score more points for the record in decade-old debates, embarrass an editor who had treated them badly, or simply help a determined young man put together what could be a very important analysis of those ten painful years in which America's best critical minds were divided on what kind of a nation America was.

NYR itself was interested enough to withdraw its own cooperation and threaten the publisher, Charterhouse, with lawsuits; and a number of critics were interested enough to strop their razors, ready for Nobile's throat. Nobile himself has heightened interest in his project by spilling the tale of what he injudiciously calls his own legal "Gethsemane" first to the journalism review (MORE) (April 1973), and then in *New Times* (April 5, 1974), where he drops a few of-course-I-can't-tell-you tidbits about the sex lives of the *NYR* crowd. Meanwhile, *Publishers Weekly* (March 11, 1974) has printed a warm evaluation of *NYR* which both balances off and praises the Nobile version.

Thus, the oft-postponed appearance of *Intellectual Skywriting* became an "event" and "everybody" waited to see the reviews of the book that reviews the reviews of all the other books.

NYR was founded just over ten years ago during the New York newspaper strike by a half-dozen intellectuals and journalists who were convinced their community needed a publication that —unlike the Sunday *New York Times*, the *Herald-Tribune* and *Saturday Review*—took books seriously enough to talk about them at length and sometimes get angry at the trivial, the venal, the inflated and the fraudulent. Its formula was simple: collect a group of books on the same subject (which correspond with the editor's tastes and concerns); send them to the best authoritative writer you can think of (and whose views at least have the editor's respect); pay him good money and promise him all the space he wants. Thus a review in *NYR* is not simply a report and a judgment on a book but an independent essay on the whole field—disarmament, witchcraft, psychohistory, sex and crumbling Catholicism —plus the reviewer's lofty or visceral vision of the question at hand. And they will give space to stylists—Murray Kempton, Wilfrid Sheed, Gore Vidal and Garry Wills—men read not necessarily because we believe them (although I usually believe at least two) but because watching each word follow on the last is like watching those waves the surfers follow around the world—rolling, tumbling, crashing climactically in a foamy white spray.

NYR editors also sense that the best journalists are also moralists. It was born and thrived in one of the most morally ambiguous decades in our history: not in the sense that the moral horror of Vietnam remained forever

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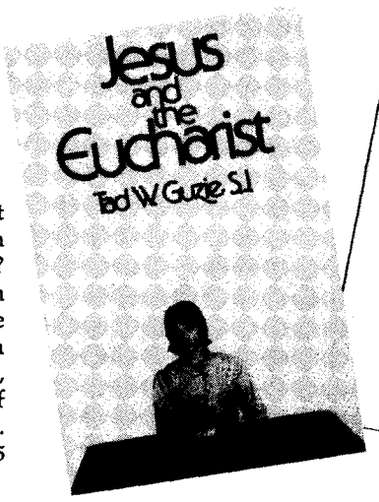

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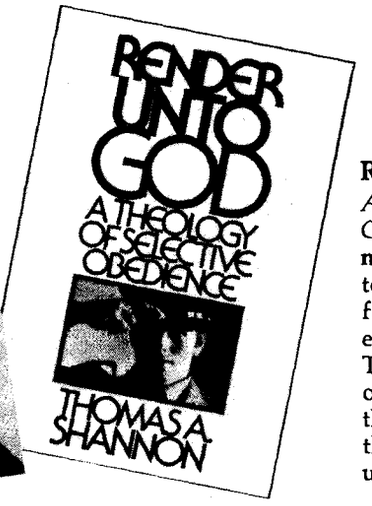

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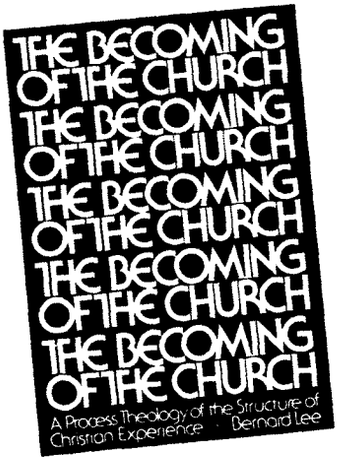

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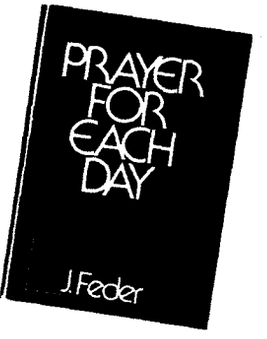

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"ambiguous" and thus made no inescapable demand on our consciences; and not in the sense that the race issue was so "complex" that we needed years of patient talk rather than a radical confrontation with the exploitation of American blacks. But ambiguous in that seldom before had the oppressive nature of some of our institutions—from universities to prisons—been so laid bare—as it was in Watts, Newark, Chicago 1968 and Kent State; and seldom before—even among good men—had the temptation toward violence as a response to social ills been so strong.

In illustrating Tom Hayden's article on the Newark riots with a page-one diagram of a Molotov Cocktail and in lending its pages to Andrew Kopkind's put-down of Martin Luther King the editors may have momentarily slipped into the irrationality that characterized so much of the late 1960s debate. Yet, more than most journals, *NYR* correctly perceived what the Vietnam war was doing both to the Vietnamese and to America. Its response was not one of mere pragmatism but documented moral outrage; and, by publishing Bernard Fall, Hans Morgenthau, I. F. Stone, Noam Chomsky, Henry Steele Commager and Mary McCarthy on Vietnam it both forced the intellectual community to get its conscience into gear and furnished thousands of professors and other journalists with documentation and hard questions of their own.

Philip Nobile has done a number of good things in his book. Intellectual feuds are interesting stories, especially when they are focused on issues of real value: the political polarization of our campuses, the assassination of John Kennedy, or even the relative literary worth of Norman Mailer; and Nobile has entertained us a bit by stirring up those feuds again. He too is the journalist as moralist; and he evaluates the quarrel between *NYR* and *Commentary* in the light of their stands on the war, as well as on whether Norman Podhoretz set up Dennis Wrong to slay *NYR* in *Commentary* because *NYR* invited Edgar Z. Friedenberg to murder Podhoretz' autobiography, *Making It*, in *NYR*. He also offers his own guidelines on how books should be assigned to reviewers; and finally he attempts to review the *Review*, rating it intellectually "tops," but "not even trying" on literature, etc., concluding—in a meteaphor that he should regret as long as a certain priest-sociologist should regret comparing Yahweh's love to a half-naked wife with a martini pitcher—that the *NYR* is like "sex" in that when it's bad it's "still pretty good."

Which brings us to the things Nobile has not done well. He has cluttered his text with over 20 expressions left over from his theology courses at Louvain—like "hyperduliac"—that will make sense only to fellow ex-seminarians. He has not organized his story from a unified point of view; rather he has patched it together, jumping back and forth with a chronicle, a narrative history, and a round of interviews in which the author plays Lincoln Steffens visiting Intelligentia, describing their living quarters, and hoping they will spill some gossip—the Truth why _____'s review was turned down or how it happened that _____ fell from favor after _____'s famous piece implying that _____ was _____.

It is very difficult to write a critical history of an institution—particularly a journal which, if it succeeds, ultimately transcends and outlasts the personalities and minor jealousies of the fallible people who put the package together each week. Gay Talese's story of the *New York Times*, *The Kingdom and the Power*, was at least a popular success because he constructed his narrative around those key moments in the struggles of colorful and ambitious newspapermen when — because of shrewd judgment, a warm word or a foolish prank—they either seized glory or saw their careers crumble to dust. Once you read Talese the *New York Times* is no longer a gray mass of print but evangelical McCandlish Phillips hounding the Ku Klux Klan Nazi Jew to suicide and Father Reston coming through in the crunch for "his boys." (Reading *Kingdom* inspired one of my students to write a fantasy about Clifton Daniel running amok in Times Square because he had been demoted to driving a delivery truck.) Perhaps under the influence of Talese, on whose sex life he has written for *Esquire*, Nobile has taken the wrong approach to his subject: trying to probe the heart of America's most influential intellectual journal by poking around the personalities of the editors and contributors. If only we could seize the personality of Robert Silvers, he pants, as on the last page he scours the editor's office for some tell-tale photograph or toy that will betray his host the way the "Rosebud" sled broke the mystery of Charles Foster Kane. No luck.

Perhaps too this is why the editors of *NYR* have become antagonistic to a book which, on the surface, certainly means to treat them very favorably: because, on an emotional level, the editors and Nobile have a very different conception of what *NYR* is doing. They see their institution as having a life of its own—it exists as a body of thought independent of the lives of the writers, in which we are not supposed to be "interested." By personalizing their endeavor Nobile has unintentionally trivialized what, to them, is sacred and above personality. After all, *NYR* isn't *like* sex because it isn't *like anything*. It's *The New York Review of Books*.

The Novel as Faith: The Gospel According to James, Hardy, Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence and Virginia Woolf

JOHN PATERSON

Gambit, $10

NATHAN A. SCOTT, JR.

In this book—whose task, strangely, has not been previously undertaken—Mr. Paterson looks back at the classic line of modern fiction in the English language running from James to Mrs. Woolf, and he seeks to define as systematically as possible the fundamental aesthetic of the novel by which its principal practitioners were guided. In-

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evitably, as he faces such figures as James and Conrad, as Joyce and Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, what he has first of all to remark is the absoluteness of their conviction that the novel, more so than any of the other great literary forms, is the medium capable of doing the fullest justice to the modern reality. "Being a novelist," said Lawrence, "I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher and the poet. The novel is the one bright book of life." And in the period extending, roughly, from 1870 to 1940, it was with a similar peremptoriness that most of the great artists using the form were prepared to lay down their claims. One may jib a little at Mr. Paterson's including "the good little Thomas Hardy" (as Henry James called him) in this company, for, though he commanded the natural fabulism of the born storyteller, he, as we feel, only just stumbled into the art of fiction and never gave himself either to any large theoretical commitments or to the kind of insistent *hauteur* expressed by Lawrence's remark. But in James, in Conrad, in Joyce, in Lawrence, and in Virginia Woolf—in the central avatars of *traditionalist modernism in English fiction* —there is, indeed, a great new dogmatic kind of faith in the novel as "the one bright book of life" which declares itself again and again in the most imperious tones.

It is somewhat surprising that Mr. Paterson does not seek to answer the question that arises most immediately, as to *why* this faith at *this* time took so firm a hold on the literary imagination. But, of course, any attempt at such an exploration, though it would have made for a richer and more interesting book would have taken him into complex issues of social and cultural history; whereas his sole concern is with the formal aesthetic of fiction that this classic modern generation evolved.

Yet, narrow as Mr. Paterson's focus is, there is one large irony that emerges from his chronicle and that gives to his book a very considerable interest. For, as he clearly demonstrates through his analysis of their prefaces and essays and notebooks and letters, the tradition of James and Hardy, of Conrad and Joyce, of Lawrence and Mrs. Woolf, was a tradition that intended, initially, to "represent life," to render the concrete actualities of experience with the least possible distortion and reductivism. "Truth alone," said the tradition (by way of Conrad), "is the justification of any fiction which makes the least claim to the quality of art." But then, from the turn of the century on, the reality to which the novelist was to be true was increasingly conceived not in terms of the thrusting materialities of the social world but in terms of the systoles and diastoles of the internal world of sensibility—which meant that the novelist began to sacrifice world to self and object to subject, that the burdens of *representation* began to seem less important than the burdens of *analysis*, that plots and heroes began to seem less crucial than metaphors and symbols. And thus a tradition that had originally constituted itself as a mode of empirical science was, by the time of Virginia Woolf, veering towards "a new abstractionism" whose claim (which Mr. Paterson tends to take at face value) was that of holding integrally together both "world and vision, fact and structure," but, as it would seem, the dimensions of world and fact having in truth been very considerably superseded by the dimensions of vision and structure.

So, in the case of the novel, one wonders if the moment of literary history that began about 1870 may not require to be thought of not as one having ended about 1940 (as Mr. Paterson in effect suggests) but as one that extends even unto our own present which is everywhere filled with programs calling for a "realism" that, in forswearing all the machinery (of plot and character and verisimilitude) belonging to traditional realist fiction, will uphold the possibilities of vision and structure. This, again, is a large question not addressed here but the tackling of which in some way, one feels, would have enlivened and enriched Mr. Paterson's argument. Within

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his chosen limit, however—of simply rehearsing the idea of the novel advanced by his subject-figures—he has produced a competent book that will no doubt have a certain usefulness for students of modern literature.

The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Poetry and Prose, 1912-1948

WAYNE COOPER, Ed.

Schocken, $10.95

JOHN DRUSKA

Wayne Cooper has edited a valuable sourcebook to the life of Claude McKay (1889-1948). Along with his clear critical introduction to McKay's career, Cooper includes in the bulk of his volume carefully selected and arranged samplings of McKay's writing. Articles and letters comprise a good part of the collection, and these appear as a helpful adjunct to any more inclusive reading of McKay's poetry and prose fiction. Cooper's poetry selections are comprehensive enough and they give us a good short view of McKay's concerns and development as a poet. The "Experiments in Fiction" chapter provides just a few extracts from McKay's fictional canon, the area of his work that I find the most interesting and most accomplished; but here, as elsewhere Cooper's headnote furnishes us with an apt framework for fitting his choices in with the historical and literary impression he tries to create through *Passion*, and for seeing his choices in the context of McKay's career. Cooper's book has the effect of drawing for us a true portrait of McKay as a black man and as an artist. At the same time, it ought to direct anyone who hasn't read McKay's novels and stories to an appreciation of them.

A Jamaican who gravitated to Harlem by way of Tuskegee and Kansas State, and later became by his admission a "troubadour wanderer" through Russia, Europe and Africa, McKay has, in Cooper's words, "received little critical attention or public recognition." Cooper describes how McKay's poetry (especially *Harlem Shadows*) was both precursor to and part of the "Harlem Renaissance" of the 1920s, and he traces McKay's subsequent growth as journalist, novelist and story-writer. Although white America generally came to regard the Harlem flourish as a vogue and Richard Wright's success in the 1940s erased for many the memory of any black artists before him, McKay retained always a sense of his artistic vocation and his role in relationship to his race. It allowed him to replenish himself through his words even as he was losing his publishers and his public.

McKay's passionate self-awareness manifests itself in two major concerns throughout his work: that the black race fulfill its tribal identity within American society but without acquiescing to it; and that he fulfill his power to make of his black experience an art that all men can share. In his early work, the poetry of *Songs of Jamaica*, *Constab Ballads* and *Harlem Shadows*, and some of the articles he contributed to revolutionary journals like Max Eastman's *The Liberator*, McKay instinctively began prophesying what we know today as the Black Power Movement. He foresaw the importance of such issues as black reluctance to desegregate at the cost of losing racial solidarity. And McKay insisted on discussing such topics, even as he refused to whitewash depictions of the creative passion he felt in his Harlem experience (the novel *Home to Harlem*), despite objection from the black intelligentsia of his day, including on occasion W. E. B. DuBois, to McKay's so-called contentiousness, racial heresies and obscenities. Once McKay had discovered his racial and artistic themes in his early work they became of a piece with the point-of-view in all his writing.

McKay's themes don't always come to life in his poetry. His reading in Jamaica had shackled him with a "conservative poetic style" that, Cooper claims, caused him to cling "devotedly to those conventional forms most revered by the educational elite of nineteenth-century Jamaica." Many of his poems fail to survive their outdated sounds of Victorian rhetoric. But the ones that do, whether polemical or not, do so, it seems to me, by virtue of their perceptive local detail ("Flame-Heart," for example). They recreate McKay's vision of his actual life in Harlem and Jamaica with, as McKay says in his preface to *Harlem Shadows*, "truthfulness and naturalness of expression instead of an enameled originality."

A number of reasons, including poverty, swayed McKay in the early 1920s from poetry to fiction. The shift in concentration seems to have allowed him to capitalize on that sense of locale I mention above. Or, as Cooper sums up, "In his prose fiction, he attempted to move beyond rebellion to a positive affirmation of black life at its simplest, most basic folk level." Freed from conventional poetic forms, McKay was able to express in a more natural voice his care for local detail and the resonance of human lives sharing a locale.

In the novel form McKay's voice overflows with detailed episode. While he acknowledged Joyce as a modern and formal master, he admired most and emulated D. H. Lawrence, not, McKay insisted, because of Lawrence's social rebellion, but because he found Lawrence's English "the ripest and most voluptuous since Shakespeare." McKay wrote *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* (set in Marseilles) in the late 1920s, and both feature only nominal plots that hinge almost entirely on coincidence or accident, picaresque heroes, and a real feeling, vivified in scene after scene, of black passion in its best sense, visualized in a b l a c k-brown-yellow spectrum—"Ancient black life rooted upon its base with all its fascinating new layers of brown, low-brown, high-brown, nut-brown, lemon, maroon, olive, mauve, gold"—and embodied in figures like *Harlem*'s Jake, buoyant amid sweetmen, grass-widows and buffet flats, or a piano player who's driven to the ancestral sources of his music, "like a primitive dance of war or of love . . . the marshaling of spears or the sacred frenzy of a phallic celebration."

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As he makes evident in *Banjo*, McKay saw the authentic tribal passion of blacks as a hope and a challenge against mechanized Western civilization, "the serried crush of trampling white feet," "the grand mechanical march of civilization." In both *Harlem* and *Banjo* the Haitian Ray appears as a kind of type of the black artist who derives his power from his association with the black common man in America and France. Neither these books, nor the later Jamaica-set *Banana Bottom* (1933) are exceptional formal achievements. In all of McKay's novels a precision in creating incident seems his real strength; and he realizes this talent to its fullest in his short stories.

McKay deserves recognition as an artist especially for such stories as the three Jamaican tales in *Gingertown* (1932), "Crazy Mary," "When I Pounded the Pavement," and "The Strange Burial of Sue," all of which read as episodes in men's lives that naturally assume the shape of stories because of their under-stated emotional climaxes. In "Pavement," for example, official demands that a Jamaican constable (McKay was one) "make a case," instead of letting minor offenders slide, lead to his inadvertently wrecking the career of a promising native. He finds the "criminal" in bed with a black servant, after he has been prodded to enforce the white law by the servant's white master, who in turn has his own reasons for seeing the native's career ruined. McKay handles this by means of a simple, emotionally-muted narrative that reflects the frustration of the black constable's self-discovery: he's become the inhuman tool of the white power.

Cooper remarks upon McKay's affinity for the short story in his headnote to the fiction section:

> (McKay) was naturally drawn to the form in his earliest attempts at fiction and . . . *Home to Harlem* was originally a short story. After the success of *Banjo*, he published his collection of short stories, largely because he did not want to become solely known as an author of picaresque tales but wished to establish himself as a writer 'of many moods.' Late in life, he remarked that 'some of my best material is in the book of short stories, *Gingertown*.'

I think telling tales of local urgency, like a tribal medium, suited McKay best, perhaps because a pastoral ideal had informed his work from the beginning, making him hope for a wholeness in things, at one point making him love "to think of communism liberating millions of city folk to go back to the land." Neither communism nor any dogma closed to self-criticism satisfied McKay long. But his ideal transmuted itself through many forms and he continued to sense it as a force of the earth alive in black folk everywhere, a power through which the artist may seize moments of life and make them art. His novels lack dramatic shape because life is really the only plot he accepted. But in their episodes, as in his stories, he realizes complete dramas of celebration.

Wayne Cooper's *The Passion of Claude McKay* is particularly helpful in revealing the racial and artistic beliefs that McKay maintained with integrity through early travail like his railroad diner's job, temporary literary success, economic failure, and his Roman Catholic conversion and lengthy illness in the 1940s. If Cooper's book lacks anything it might be a fuller treatment of the critical work, however sparse, others have done on McKay. Cooper, though, does full justice to his subject without pitying or edifying him.

Near the end of *Banana Bottom*, McKay's last published novel, the narrator implies his author's attitude toward Squire Gensir, a white character in the book who is one of the first educated men to take Jamaica folk art seriously and who resembles one of McKay's early mentors. *Passion* reinforces my feeling that, with minor alteration, McKay's praise of the Squire might serve us as a valid eulogy of McKay as well. While its romantic rhetoric verges at times on the banal, its language is endemic to McKay's passion and its basic truth is,

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REVIEWERS

FATHER RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., is book editor of *Commonweal*.

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I believe, energized by the best stories McKay has written, which also prove that art makes the most forceful polemic:

> Before him it had been generally said the Negroes were inartistic. But he had found artistry where others saw nothing, because he believed that wherever the imprints of nature and humanity were found, there also were the seeds of creative life, and that above the dreary levels of existence everywhere there were always the radiant, the mysterious, the wonderful, the strange great moments whose magic may be caught by any clairvoyant mind and turned into magical form for the joy of man.

The Florida State University Department of Religion announces an opening in New Testament Studies to be filled at the advanced assistant or associate Professor level—available September 1974. Interested persons should submit a **curriculum vitae** and three names of persons to be contacted for recommendations. Contact: Dr. John J. Carey, Chairman, Department of Religion, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 229)

Commonweal's reputation would do this to *any* literary figure, much less to the gallant and currently beleaguered Chesterton, at whose chubby knees many of your readers first learned that the English language could be applied to contemporary issues with charm and wit.

The irony would have amused GKC, but it depresses me. You get the "Et Tu, Brute" Award for 1974.

JAMES W. ARNOLD

DeBary, Fla.

To the Editors: It surprises me that you would publish a review of Barker's *G.K. Chesterton* [Mar. 22] by a man (Dennis O'Brien) who makes a great point of never having read Chesterton except in the form of some "great lines" reproduced by this biographer. Can one attach any greater importance to such a review than to a put-down of Shakespeare some years ago by a critic who found the plays to be mostly a stringing together of quotes anyone could find in a thesaurus? Maybe O'Brien is only saying that Barker's biography of GKC didn't move him to a course of action (i.e., reading Chesterton) which his poor opinion of ghetto-mentality Catholics who admired Chesterton when O'Brien was young precluded him from taking. If so, the deficiency need not be located in just Barker or Chesterton.

It seems to me I read one or another of the Father Brown mysteries but found them too clever to my taste. *Heterodoxy* was a surfeit of brilliance. After two or three pieces of that rich cake, I put it away. *The Everlasting Man* was better suited to my pedestrian talent. It showed what a tyro, a journalist could do with opinions made available to the public by scholars like Denis de Rougement who seemed to expect their reputations to compensate for the sloppy logic of their presentation. It is just possible Chesterton realized that the force of the triple reduction to absurdity that constituted the backbone of his book was a personal gift to him that could not be expected to impress anybody who didn't share the gift, and who had read more widely than the rules of the Index of Forbidden Books prescribed. He was not above substituting ridicule for logic, as when he noted that belief in Providence allowed of no exceptions, even in the presence of its apparently most meaningless manifestation, meaning de Rougement. It occurs to me that he might have applied this same label to the man who faulted a writer without having read him.

GERARD HINRICHS

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: Regarding Dennis O'Brien's review of *G. K. Chesterton* [Mar. 22]: just nitpicking or is there really something extraordinary about a reviewer confidently dismissing Chesterton as irrelevant while happily admitting he has never read any Chesterton?

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

Woodbury, Conn.

To the Editors: With regard to the review of Barker's *Chesterton* in your March 22 issue, it was startling to learn that reviewer Dean O'Brien isn't sure that he ever read anything of G.K.C.'s nor intends to start doing so at this late date.

I suppose that it is reassuring that Dean O'Brien indicates that he *did* read the book he reviewed.

I imagine that Chesterton would have had some comment with at least

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low wit, shallow irony and mild sense to make on this sort of situation.

JOHN F. S. ABBOTT

Reply

Middlebury, Vt.

Dear Chesterton lovers: I apologize if I wounded your good and genial friend. To be sure, *Commonweal* might well (or better) have selected one steeped in GKC to review Barker's biography. On the other hand, a legitimate principle for editorial assignment is the current state of readership and I suspect that my own blankness on GKC is not entirely idiosyncratic.

I accepted the assignment because I have always had a curiosity about Chesterton from the high praise he received from those for whom I retain great affection. I rather hoped Barker would convince me to make amends for a wasted intellectual adulthood. Obviously he did not. The anger/anguish of the GKC supporters almost persuades me to try again. I noted, for instance, that Chesterton's book on St. Thomas was advertised in a recent issue of *Commonweal* and I thought that for my sins against the man I might offer to read it and correct my views and review. But I really don't have the heart for it.

I ask myself, why should I want to read something on St. Thomas Aquinas by G.K. Chesterton? When GKC was halfway through the writing of this biography, he sent Dorothy Collins to London to get some books on the saint. He left the selection up to her and "when she got the books, Chesterton sped through them. He had supremely the journalist's ability to drag the meaning and usefulness out of a book without actually reading too much of it." (Barker, p. 281) Oh well, perhaps there is a journalist's gift for reaching the essence without too much reading. But then what is the intuited essence?

As Barker notes, the book on Thomas expresses GKC's own belief in the blessedness of life. "St. Thomas declared vitally, vividly, that life is a living story, with a great beginning and a great close; rooted in the primeval joy of God and finding its fruition in the final happiness of humanity. . ." (Barker, p. 282). I am just not sure I could take a whole book full of that much confidence.

If GKC's day is past, it is because "debate style Christianity" of which he is a brilliant example is past. Michael Harrington notes in his autobiography the emergence of "the stutter style" in the radical rhetoric of the '60s. "It assumed that any show of logic or rhetorical skill was *prima facie* proof of hypocrisy and dishonesty. . . . The sincere man was therefore supposed to be confused and halfarticulate and anguished in his self-revelation." I certainly don't accept the radical point of view and it has its own self-deception which confuses muttering with mystic wisdom. I am sure that the jolly journalist was completely sincere in his view of life as a story with a happy ending. His writing style issues from bastions of security. I am sorry—sorry indeed—that I lack the faith which would justify the style. Post-Dachau, post-Bonhoeffer, Vatican II, Ingmar Bergman—post-something—I believe many Christians find it hard to rise above the stutter style when it comes to talk of God, and to the extent that this is true, the dashing polemics of Shaw and Chesterton (both sides) become virtually unreadable. There may be a message that life is founded on primeval joy—perhaps it can be conveyed in the granite intricacies of a medieval *Summa,* perhaps in the troubled confessions of a martyr or saint, but I lack the imagination to see it in accents of "charm and wit." DENNIS O'BRIEN

Corrections

In Congressman Henry S. Reuss' April 12 article, "A No-Confidence Amendment," the Presidential-succession act cited on page 129, line 6, was that of March 1, 1792—not 1972.

In the letter of William F. Buckley, Jr., in the April 19 issue, the word "autology" in the third last sentence should have read "tautology."

THE EDITORS

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